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ABSTRACT

In general, intercollegiate women coaches and athletic administrators are not applying for new or better jobs. To discover their reasons and to learn more about their career experiences, questionnaires were sent to all National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) senior woman administrators (SWA) who had been SWAs at their institutions for over 10 years. Of the respondents (N=174), over 43 percent have never sought a lateral or vertical job change, and over 20 percent have never contemplated a job change. The most frequently stated reason for not having changed was feeling comfortable on campus, followed by feelings that the job was challenging or rewarding. The factor that most would change about their current jobs, or convince them to change jobs, is more money. A second important factor is more authority. In response to the question about the worst aspects of their careers in coaching, answers included long hours, salary not reflective of the time/work commitment, low external rewards, and sex discrimination. Responses to questions about the best aspects included interesting variety of duties, involvement with young people, challenge, and the rewards of success. More than 99 percent of the SWAs stated that the best outweighed the worst. Representative responses to the question of why women athletic coaches and administrators fail to make job changes included: "too tired/no energy left"; "afraid to risk move"; "women have become discouraged with the lack of openness of searches"; and "family not mobile." (IAH)

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Job Stasis: Reflections of Immobility and Resistance to Job Change Among Senior Women Athletic Personnel

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It may be that perceptions are more important than reality when trying to solve a problem. The problem is the decreasing representation of females within the coaching and administrative ranks of intercollegiate athletics. The perceptions include those found in previous studies which indicate that one of the more important causes of the decline is that females fail to apply for jobs.

Women who have not yet entered the field have alternative, attractive opportunities in business and the sciences which were not readily available to them a few years ago. Perhaps they are not applying for jobs within intercollegiate athletics simply because they are applying for jobs outside the field which pay better and appear to have the possibility of greater advancement. However, women who are already in the field of athletics, either as coaches or administrators, are also not applying for better or new jobs. The reasons for not applying are held within the hearts and minds of these experienced, qualified women. Their reasons might hold clues to solving the problem of the declining representation of females within the leadership ranks of intercollegiate athletics.

To discover their reasons and also to learn more about what life has been like for these women, questionnaires were sent to all NCAA 'Senior Woman Administrator's (SWA)<sup>1</sup> who have held the SWA position at their institution for ten years or more. Among other things, they were asked why they had stayed and how they had or had not interacted with the job market over the years. Over 70% of the women completed the somewhat difficult-to-answer questionnaire. The insight and introspection so generously given by these women concerning their professional lives in intercollegiate athletics have painted an intensely colorful picture of commitment, self sacrifice, enthusiasm and frustration.

## About the Respondents:

The women responding to the questionnaire have been in their current jobs for an average of almost 18 years. Thus they possess significant historical perspective and professional experience. For instance, most of the 174 who responded witnessed the birth and death of the AIAW. Most remember the frustration of the *Grove City v Bell* case which effectively removed intercollegiate athletics from Title IX's jurisdiction. In 1988 they saw the reapplication of Title IX jurisdiction to college athletics via the Civil Rights Restoration Act, and through all the years, they have remained at their posts.

Of these women, 27% of whom are mothers, 68.6% began their careers teaching physical education. Almost 29% of the women were in college at a time varsity athletic participation was non-existent for women and thus they were not able to include varsity athletics within their college careers. However 71% of the respondents did participate in varsity athletic programs as part of their college careers. Those who had college varsity experiences found their athletic homes in the following sports:

<sup>1</sup>The NCAA asks each of its member institutions to designate a "Senior Woman Administrator". In some cases, the SWA is a male and in other cases the person is a female not associated with athletics at all. But in general the position is held by the most senior female administrator or coach within the athletic program. The individuals involved in this study were all females involved in athletics.

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|                |       |              |       |
|----------------|-------|--------------|-------|
| ≥ basketball   | 69.3% | ≥ lacrosse   | 11.0% |
| ≥ field hockey | 48.8% | ≥ badminton  | 6.3%  |
| ≥ softball     | 35.4% | ≥ swimming   | 5.5%  |
| ≥ volleyball   | 31.5% | ≥ golf       | 3.1%  |
| ≥ tennis       | 31.5% | ≥ gymnastics | 3.1%  |

(and a few in track & field, diving, synchronized swimming, riflery, sailing, fencing, and archery.)

Eighty nine percent of the women who were on varsity teams believe that their intercollegiate athletic experiences helped them in their jobs. But what was it about a career in coaching and administering athletics which made them enter the field in the first place? The SWAs said they entered their career because:

|                                                                                     |       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| ≥ they enjoy sports                                                                 | 81.4% |
| ≥ they're committed to the notion that sports has positive carry over value to life | 80.2% |
| ≥ they're competitive                                                               | 52.9% |
| ≥ they want to help youth grow                                                      | 37.7% |

These are qualified women, averaging 2.2 degrees with an average of 11+ years of coaching experience, but over 43% have never sought a lateral or vertical job change and over a fifth have never even contemplated a job change.

Forty four percent of the women are working in Division I schools; 21% in Division II and 35% in Division III so they views of the job market and their professional satisfaction span the full spectrum of NCAA program structures and philosophies. The fact that 74% had spent their entire careers to date within the same division coincides with data developed by other researchers.<sup>2</sup> The open ended responses of the SWA indicate that the static nature of divisional address is perhaps NOT due to an inability to find a job in a more desirable division but rather a contentment with the philosophy of the division in which they now work. Ninety five percent of these experienced women believe they are fully qualified to switch divisions. The typical responses from the 5% who did not think they had the qualifications to change divisions indicated easily remedied deficits such as a need to review the NCAA divisional regulations, better public speaking skills, and more confidence to face a new job's challenges. It often seems that women believe they must be perfect for a job before they apply.

#### **Their Clout:**

After holding their positions as SWAs at their institutions for at least ten years, it might be expected that the respondents had developed a good deal of clout over the entire men's and women's program. Indeed, 16.6% serve as the head administrators over both programs. However, 46.8% serve as the head administrator of the women's program only and another 16.6% responded that after more than 10 years, they "have a title but my authority is off the bottom of the chart".

#### **Their Support Systems:**

One of the most frequently listed perceptions for the declining representation of females in intercollegiate athletics, is the lack of support systems. In many instances, the professional lives of the women involved in this study began before the word 'networking' was coined; yet they have endured. They have found support in a number of places. Most frequently cited is the support of:

|                                                                      |       |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| ≥ other professionals in athletics outside the schools               | 66.6% |
| ≥ campus colleagues in athletics                                     | 55.5% |
| ≥ campus colleagues not in athletics                                 | 48.8% |
| ≥ spouse/significant other                                           | 36.7% |
| ≥ networks developed around an organizational base(ex:NAGWS, NACWAA) | 32.8% |
| ≥ family members (parents, children)                                 | 26.4% |

One might hypothesize that the reason that the respondents looked first to professionals in athletics outside their own school, was because they were the solitary female athletics professional at their school. In addition, the social isolation which results from the commitment of extreme amounts

of time and energy to their professional lives may, in part be the reason that they seek support from colleagues who might at least understand the lack of social time.

### Why Have They Stayed?

Less than 22% of the women went to college in the same or neighboring community and even fewer (16.9%) grew up in the area in which they now work. So, the SWAs' lack of vertical or horizontal job movement does not seem to be based on wanting to stay in a particular location because of its strong support system or historical affiliation ties.

Other, non-professional ties to the community may have an impact on the reticence to move. Over 87% of the SWAs own property in the area; 33% like the area so much they want to retire there; and 29% have parents/close family living nearby. Yet, when directly asked why they had stayed at their posts for over ten years, the answers were often more subtle. The five most frequently cited reasons for staying were:

|                                          |       |                            |       |
|------------------------------------------|-------|----------------------------|-------|
| ≥ I feel comfortable on campus           | 89.0% | ≥ My job is interesting    | 68.8% |
| ≥ My job is challenging                  | 75.7% | ≥ My salary meets my needs | 60.6% |
| ≥ My job is rewarding (other than money) | 72.8% |                            |       |

The fifth reason for staying, "My salary meets my needs", seems puzzling at first glance. However, before we assume the salaries of the respondents are admirably high, it might be wise to consider the level of their perceived needs. The respondents are strong, committed women who, by their own admission, spend an extraordinary percentage of their waking hours in the service of their institutions. Thus the financial needs brought about by lengthy vacations, second homes, young children, multiple televisions, and so forth are perhaps reduced simply as a function of their commitment to work. Secondly, in the historic absence of sufficient salaries, many people reduce their wish list to fit and then become accustomed to the 'fit'. As we'll see below, when we asked the SWAs what they would change about their present jobs, the more frequent answer was "More money."

Over 78% have thought seriously about seeking a job elsewhere however, but only 57% had ever applied.

### What Would It Take to Induce Them to Leave?

Over 54% had been offered one or more jobs elsewhere yet still chose to stay even though they frequently yearned for changes in their jobs. The most frequently cited change the SWAs would make in their current jobs was to be paid more money. In descending order they would change the following if they were going to stay:

|                                            |       |
|--------------------------------------------|-------|
| ≥ more money                               | 48.8% |
| ≥ increase budget                          | 41.7% |
| ≥ match authority with responsibility      | 30.0% |
| ≥ more support staff report directly to me | 30.0% |
| ≥ comply with Title IX (sex equity)        | 26.4% |
| ≥ don't make me wear more than one hat     | 26.4% |
| quit coaching 'hat'                        | 10.0% |
| quit administration 'hat'                  | 5.9%  |
| quit teaching 'hat'                        | 5.3%  |

Similarly, when asked what the three most important items a new job could offer in order to convince the SWAs to change jobs, the top answers were in descending order:

- ≥ more money
- ≥ match authority with responsibility
- ≥ don't make me wear more than one hat

For those who had applied for a job at one time or another but did not get it, the three most frequently perceived reasons were (in descending order):

- ≥ "They had another person picked out before the search ever began."
- ≥ "Others were equally qualified."
- ≥ "I was not the best qualified."

### **The Need for Active Recruitment**

It is often stated that qualified female coaches and administrators are scarce and those who do exist don't apply for jobs. The second half of this statement is empirically true to a large extent but the first is not. The truth seems to be that highly skilled, experienced women, such as our respondents have simply not been recruited significantly.

When an athletic program is seeking applicants, experience seems to demonstrate that highly qualified male candidates are identified and then recruited with the inducements of salary or perquisites sufficient to get the candidate to leave his present employer. The same is NOT true for highly qualified female candidates. Until similar recruiting techniques are used for both males and females, it will continue to erroneously appear that there is a lack of qualified females available. In addition, "more money", the number one inducement to change jobs as identified by the SWAs, will only become a reality when active recruitment/inducement becomes a part of the job market dynamics for females as well as males.

### **Professional Lives: Worst and Best**

The SWAs responding to our study have experienced a great deal and have overcome many barriers. Their views on the worst and best things in their careers, although impossible to quantify, still provide very valuable insights.

In response to the question, "What have been the worst things about your career in coaching?" comments such as these are reflective of the majority: "long hours, evening and weekend work", "salary not equal to time/work commitment", "low external rewards", "frantic pace of life", "sex discrimination", "plays havoc with personal life", "dealing with old boy network", "men paying lip service to equity", "my coaching salary accounted for 1/18th of my salary although coaching responsibility required more than 300% of my time", "athletics takes over your life", "no respect from male coaching staff", "you must give 200%-when you are on you are on-it can be draining on anyone", "difficult to spend time with family and if you're single its even harder to strike a balance", "being treated as the enemy or less than intelligent by other faculty members and thus being viewed as less valuable to the educational process".

In response to the question, "What have been the best things about your career in coaching?" comments such as these are reflective of the majority: "Interesting variety of duties, never the same", "involvement with young people keeps you young", "the constant challenge", "the rewards of success", "the opportunity to make a difference in young peoples lives", "it's never boring", "people in athletics are fun, terrific and energetic", "the people, the excitement of competition", "the development of long term friendships with athletes and other coaches", "watching young people grow and mature and being part of the positive influence on their lives", "an opportunity to work with highly talented and motivated young people".

Whatever their views of the best and worst aspects, their professional lives have not been without highs and lows. Perhaps that fact is an important one for those new to the field to remember and prepare for.

Regardless of the nature of the lows experienced by the SWAs, 99.4% said, "The best outweighed the worst".

### **Would They Do It Again?**

Putting action to their words, 77% said they would select a career in athletics again.

Those who wouldn't, infrequently indicated dissatisfaction with their career and quite frequently indicated the enticement of career choices in business, medicine and the law, which were largely unavailable to women when Title IX was enacted.

### **Why Don't Female Coaches and Administrators Seek Lateral and Vertical Job Changes?** After having told us so much about themselves, we asked the SWAs to consider more

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<sup>2</sup>Work by Maureen Fitzgerald (University of Missouri-Columbia) as well as other studies seem to indicate that movement between divisions is uncommon for female coaches and administrators.

generally the issue of the failure of women to make vertical and lateral job changes. Their answers, again impossible to quantify, at least provide insights into their perceptions of the reasoning of others. We asked them, "Why do you think women don't move from their current positions or seek new jobs?" Representative comments included: "too tired-no energy left", "afraid to risk move - women don't take as many job risks as men", "women have become discouraged with the lack of openness of searches and frequently are the token female candidate", "family -not mobile", "salaries not attractive enough to move", "security", "changing jobs is much too risky- there's a fear out there of getting a new job and then not getting a fair chance", "with the loss of women's athletic departments there is no place to get experience and without experience you're 'not qualified'" "athletics is still (and may always be) a male dominated profession leaving little room for women to make their mark except on rare occasions", "women don't feel they have a chance to be hired as an athletic director so why try to move up", "as women we have to 'walk on water' to be successful-mistakes are not allowed", "glory and ego don't play as big a part in women's lives-service and dedication are more important-our comfort level is important and we often don't use the same yardstick to measure our abilities-we feel we need to be super qualified to apply and men seem to feel they can do the job even if not qualified", "the old boy network is so strong we have a difficult time moving up in our old positions much less new ones", "women feel a greater permanence and allegiance toward jobs than men don't", "because of social constraints, women can't move as freely with their families as men can", "better the devil you know than the one you don't", "women apply for jobs they think they can get - men apply for jobs they want regardless of their qualifications", "women make nests and are reluctant to leave them - they are relationship people, concerned with the needs of others".

### **A Few Reflections on Causing Change**

The static nature of the job market for female coaches and administrators is very troubling. The lack of applications misleads the hiring officers to think there is a lack of qualified women. It has also, as odd as it might seem, led to a failure of salaries and other inducements to grow for women. We would like to offer a very brief and eclectic list of small steps we might all take, whether male or female, coach or administrator, to begin remedying the situation.

- ≥ Apply for lateral and vertical job changes and insist on salaries and perquisites appropriate for the job, rather than those deemed sufficient for a female candidate'.
- ≥ If a job does not offer a appropriate salary and/or perquisites and therefore you elect to withdraw from the search process, tell the searching institution why. If institutions aren't made aware of the cost of recruiting qualified female candidates, the cost will always remain low.
- ≥ Recommend females for every job opening coming across your desk.
- ≥ Apply for every job opening which you might consider accepting IF the salary and perquisites were made sufficiently inviting.
- ≥ Value yourself so that others value you. Don't hesitate to negotiate an elevation in the stated salary and perquisites. It helps the market value all women more highly.
- ≥ Don't wait until you're "perfect" to apply.
- ≥ Insist on Affirmative Action searches being fully carried out.
- ≥ Commit yourself to the notion that in this "age of reform" a female's voice in the leadership of athletics is even more valuable and the market should reflect that value.

Seeking changes in one's employment requires risk taking and an entrepreneurial spirit. When Title IX was passed, jobs in business, medicine and the law were not as readily available to women as they are today. Perhaps, over the past few years, many of those female risk-takers and entrepreneurs who might have selected coaching as a career, chose, instead, to go into the more financially rewarding areas of business, medicine and the law, thereby leaving in coaching a concentration of women who are not as eager to take risks or more likely, women who have decided to remain and try to make changes where they are.

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